

ICPS newsletter

The State secretary—a manager and minister's advisor

The International Centre for Policy Studies, with funding from the World Bank, held a workshop in Kiev entitled "The Creation of The State Secretary Institution in Ukraine: Options and the World Experience". The participants included new ministerial state secretaries, officials from the Administration of the President and the CMU Secretariat, deputies, and representatives of NGOs. The focus of the discussion was the development of the institution of the ministerial state secretaries within the civil service. Foremost among those attending were Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, Vasyl Rohovyi, the President's commissioner for the administrative reform, Yuriy Ehanurov, the Director of the State Chancellery of Latvia, Gunta Veismane, and other international experts

One of the main objectives of administrative reform in Ukraine is to establish a clear division between political and administrative activities within the civil service, and to increase its effectiveness.

Since the Soviet system of public administration consisted of a strict hierarchy of officials, who merely implemented the policies of the Communist party, the Ukrainian civil service has had little experience in dividing political and administrative functions. Ministers were merely the administrative coordinators of their ministries, and had no opportunity to influence policy in their sectors.

Now, ministers are to become political figures, responsible for making strategic decisions, while the role of implementing policy effectively is to be passed to proficient civil servants.

The role of these ministerial civil servants is much more important than it was under Soviet rule. Their main task is now to collect information and provide quality analysis, so that effective policies can be drawn up.

The establishment of the institution of the state secretary is a vital step in the

administrative reform of Ukraine. This institution should become the main component of the system that coordinates and manages the process of government policymaking.

The state secretary has two main functions: first, he is a ministerial manager, responsible for managing resources, personnel and the budget. Second, he is to be an impartial advisor to the minister, responsible for the drafting of resolutions and providing informed policy consultation to the minister.

But there is also a third task—no less important. The state secretary is also the member of a larger team of state secretaries, responsible for coordinating inter-ministerial activities that affect government decision-making and policymaking.

Administrative reform should be implemented consistently

The establishment of the institution of the state secretary in Ukraine is being carried out according to the principle of consistent implementation of administrative reform. Yuriy Ehanurov, speaking at the workshop, stated that the main objective of administrative

reform is to transform the civil service into well-tuned mechanism with clear division between political and administrative functions. He also said that an administrative reform plan is being worked out now, and that by the end of this year it should be adopted by a presidential decree.

The deputy chief of the Presidential Administration, Leonid Pidpalov, pointed out that state secretaries must support the keeping of governmental records, manage the activities of ministers and the day-to-day work of ministries. This will free ministers from daily administrative responsibilities and give them more opportunity to focus on the strategic problems of their sectors and the political means to solve them.

Clear standards help the government work effectively

According to deputy secretary of the CMU Secretariat, Petro Krupko, the establishment of the institution of the state secretary in Ukraine has already lead to improved communication between the Cabinet of Ministers, the CMU Secretariat and the various ministries. He told the workshop that one of the most important components of the reform was making the state secretary responsible for managing the daily activities of minister.

However, to allow the civil service to work still more efficiently, more changes are needed. For example, standards for documents used in communications among the ministries and the Cabinet of Ministers must be followed. Some work had already been done in this regard: eight standards for documents have been adopted. Mr. Krupko said all ministers preparing proposals for

consideration by the Cabinet of Ministers should stick to these standards. The standardisation of documents would also allow the government documentation system to be computerised.

Difficulties in developing the new institution

According to the State Secretary for the Ministry of Justice in Ukraine, Alexander Lavrinovich, the position of state secretary should exist in all institutions of government headed by politicians. This, he said, would allow a clear distinction to be made between the political and administrative activities of these institutions. However, he emphasised the long-term nature of this change.

Mr. Lavrynovych focused on several major areas of work he foresaw in establishing the institution of the state secretary:

- the necessity to create a legal framework for this institution, namely to adopt a Law on the Cabinet of Ministers;
- clarifying the role and responsibilities of the state secretary, both in work within the ministry and between ministries;
- officials need to become used to the concept of a division between political and administrative duties;
- the multiplicity of tasks, demanding two-staged implementation, with both politicians and civil servants involved. This demands a clear division of authorities and responsibilities. The politician should oversee the quality and timeliness of the civil servant's work, but not get involved in its details. Civil servants must not only ensure the implementation of the necessary procedures and following the standards for documents, but also identify priorities among the questions to be considered. The consideration and discussion of these questions should focus not on figures and the forms of documents, but on the problem itself, said Mr. Lavrynovych.

Ukraine needs to work out its own model of the state secretary institution

A former Deputy State Secretary of a Canadian ministry, and now a World Bank expert, Mihal Ben-Gera, told the workshop that it is impossible to determine which western model would be the most appropriate for Ukraine. Each country has its own political and constitutional systems and its own culture. That is why Ukraine should work out its own, "made in Ukraine" system of state secretaries, one that would comply with Ukrainian legislation and the country's political culture.

The state secretary in general has one role—to support the minister. But the minister has a dual role: he is responsible for sector policy and has a collegial responsibility for the policies of the government and the decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers. So, the state secretary also has a dual role, namely to support the minister in performing sector responsibilities and to participate in the collective management of the administration.

Mihal Ben-Gera analyzed the experience of the state secretary's work in developed democracies, and on the basis of this analysis painted a detailed portrait of the role played by the state secretary.

The state secretary is **responsible for managing inputs in the ministries**, namely the budget, the personnel (including personnel development), and physical resources.

The state secretary is **responsible for managing the outputs of the ministry**, namely the policies, regulations and services that the ministry is to provide. He also coordinates the preparation of work-plans.

The state secretary **manages the "broad portfolio" of the ministry**, meaning all the elements of the portfolio of the ministry that are not part of the ministry (agencies, commissions, etc.).

The state secretary is **responsible for managing external relations of the ministry**. He organizes consultations with the government Secretariat, the parliament, the ministries, NGOs, and the public.

The principal role of the state secretary is to bring together and coordinate all the inputs and outputs of the ministry. Thus the state secretary is the leader of the ministry team and plays a dual role:

- **the role of an advisor** who is responsible for consultations on how to achieve the ministry's strategic goals. The state secretary helps the minister to identify objectives and ways to achieve them. He also must make sure that the minister is always getting good advice on day to day problems;
 - **the role of a manager** who has to ensure that policies are implemented, that the decisions of a minister and decisions of the government are put into practice. He is also a manager of information; he has to ensure that the circulation of information within the ministry is effective both vertically and horizontally. The state secretary is the manager of the ministerial resources and staff. The state secretary should invest time in the management team and effectively distribute jobs among the members of the team.
- Lastly, the most important part of state secretary's job is to identify policy priorities and to focus on them. ■

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All the materials from the workshop "The Creation of the State Secretary Institution in Ukraine: Options and the World Experience" are available on-line at: http://www.icps.kiev.ua/eng/training_materials.html